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CONSUMER TIME

FREEDOM FROM FIRE

NETWORK: NBC

DATE: October 5, 1946

ORIGIN: WRC

TIME: 12:15-12:30 PM EDT

(Produced by the United States Department of Agriculture  
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CONSUMER TIME is restricted to network broadcast of the  
program...presented for more than thirteen years in the  
interest of consumers.)

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1. SOUND: CASH REGISTER RINGS TWICE...MONEY IN TILL
2. JOHN: It's CONSUMER TIME!
3. SOUND: CASH REGISTER...CLOSE DRAWER
4. ANNCR: During the next fifteen minutes the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations make their facilities available for the presentation of CONSUMER TIME by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.
5. SOUND: WAIL OF FIRE SIREN...UP AND OUT
6. JOHN: At this very moment, with wailing siren and clanging bell, fire engines are approaching someone's home. In two minutes time, somewhere else in America, they again will wake the echoes as they respond to the alarm of a fire in a home. How do you know it won't be yours?
7. SOUND: FIRE SIREN...UP AND OUT
8. FREYMAN: Johnny, is it really true that every time the clock ticks off two minutes,<sup>a</sup>/fire breaks out in another home?
9. JOHN: That's right, Mrs. Freyman. And every single minute of the day and night, somebody's home or place of business is burning.



10. FREYMAN: But Johnny, we can't afford to have houses burning down... there aren't enough houses now to go around.
11. JOHN: And the same is true of food...and all the other goods the whole world needs for a speedy reconversion to the peacetime economy. That's why President Truman proclaimed next week as National Fire Prevention Week.
12. FREYMAN: Seems to me that Fire Prevention week comes in early October every year.
13. JOHN: Mmmm hmmm...and for a special reason. It always includes October ninth...that's the anniversary of the great Chicago fire of 1871. Besides, we seem to need more fire prevention when fall and winter roll around.
14. FREYMAN: Johnny, what's the mystery behind all these fires?
15. JOHN: There's no mystery...each killing, destroying fire has a simple and a very real cause. Most fires in houses are preventable. Almost every fire in a home is the result of carelessness.
16. FREYMAN: (SHOCKED) Oh Johnny...I simply can't believe that. It can't be true that everyone in the whole country goes around accidentally dropping lighted matches or cigarettes and setting fires.
17. JOHN: No...but there are lots of other ways to set fire to a house. For instance, let's look in on the Careless Carrigans and see just how many times they've narrowly escaped going to blazes...and all in one day. Take Mrs. Carrigan...she prides herself on her housekeeping, because she's been at it for twenty-five years or so. (LOWER VOICE) There's Mrs. Carrigan...in her living room, and lucky for us, she talks to herself (FADE) while she's cleaning up.



18. CARRIGAN: "Fellow club members...my subject for today is Fire Prevention Week". Hmmm, I guess that's as good a beginning as any. I don't see why the chairman chose me to give the speech to the club anyway... Now...let's see...what can I tell them... (my, there's a lot of dust on this table) Oh, I know... "Ladies"...use only safety matches and keep them out of the children's reach"...I guess I'd better empty the vaccuum cleaner bag into the incinerater now...
19. SOUND: FOOTSTEPS, OPEN DOOR, DOOR SLAMS SHUT HARD
20. JOHN: Wow!
21. FREYMAN: What's the matter, Johnny?
22. JOHN: Well, Mrs. Freyman, when Mrs. Carrigan slammed her door on the way back from the incinerater, I thought she had just blown up the whole apartment house.
23. FREYMAN: But Johnny, how silly. How could she possibly do that?
24. JOHN: Well, you were watching her...didn't she empty her vaccuum cleaner dust bag into the incinerater chute?
25. FREYMAN: Yes, but what's wrong with that?
26. JOHN: Well, any dust that burns will also explode, especially if there's an open flame somewhere around while the dust is still in the air.
27. FREYMAN: But Mrs. Carrigan didn't blow up the house.
28. JOHN: No she was lucky...chalk up one escape for her. But you have to be very careful with any kind of dust...even flour or cornstarch. And the experts say that coal dust, or wood or sawdust...will explode under those conditions too.
29. FREYMAN: Well, I never heard that before, but I certainly will remember to wrap the dust from my vaccuum cleaner in a couple of sheets of newspaper.





30. JOHN: Or you can put it in a bag. But make sure the bundle holds together. The important thing to remember...is never to toss loose dust into the stove, the heater, or especially the incinerator.
31. FREYMAN: That would be one way to get a bang out of life.
32. JOHN: You said it. Why a pound of flour dust, under the right conditions, can produce a mighty big explosion. It could fling an automobile over the roof of a seven-story building. But let's get back to Mrs. Carrigan... And see how she's coming with her speech on Fire Prevention.
33. FREYMAN: (SARCASTIC) Fire Prevention!
34. SOUND: PAUSE
35. CARRIGAN: "And ladies I warn you that cigars and cigarettes must be put out in ash trays, And I mean put out." Yes, I think that's a good thing to stress in my speech.
36. SOUND: DOOR OPENING.
37. CARRIGAN: Oh, goodness...this storage closet is just a mess...I don't see why Joe wants to keep all those old newspapers anyway. And I do wish we could put this old mattress someplace else until we need it. Then maybe I'd have room for my paint things. After all I can't keep these old oily rags anyplace else. This closet looks like our name is Magee instead of Carrigan, I'll have to get after Joe to clean this up...some day soon.
38. DOOR SLAMS:
39. JOHN: Well, I still think that lady is lucky, Mrs. Freyman. All that stuff in the closet is liable to start the home fires burning any day...spontaneous ignition, they call it.
40. FREYMAN: Well, I've heard of that...Johnny...but I thought it was only caused by damp hay on the farm.

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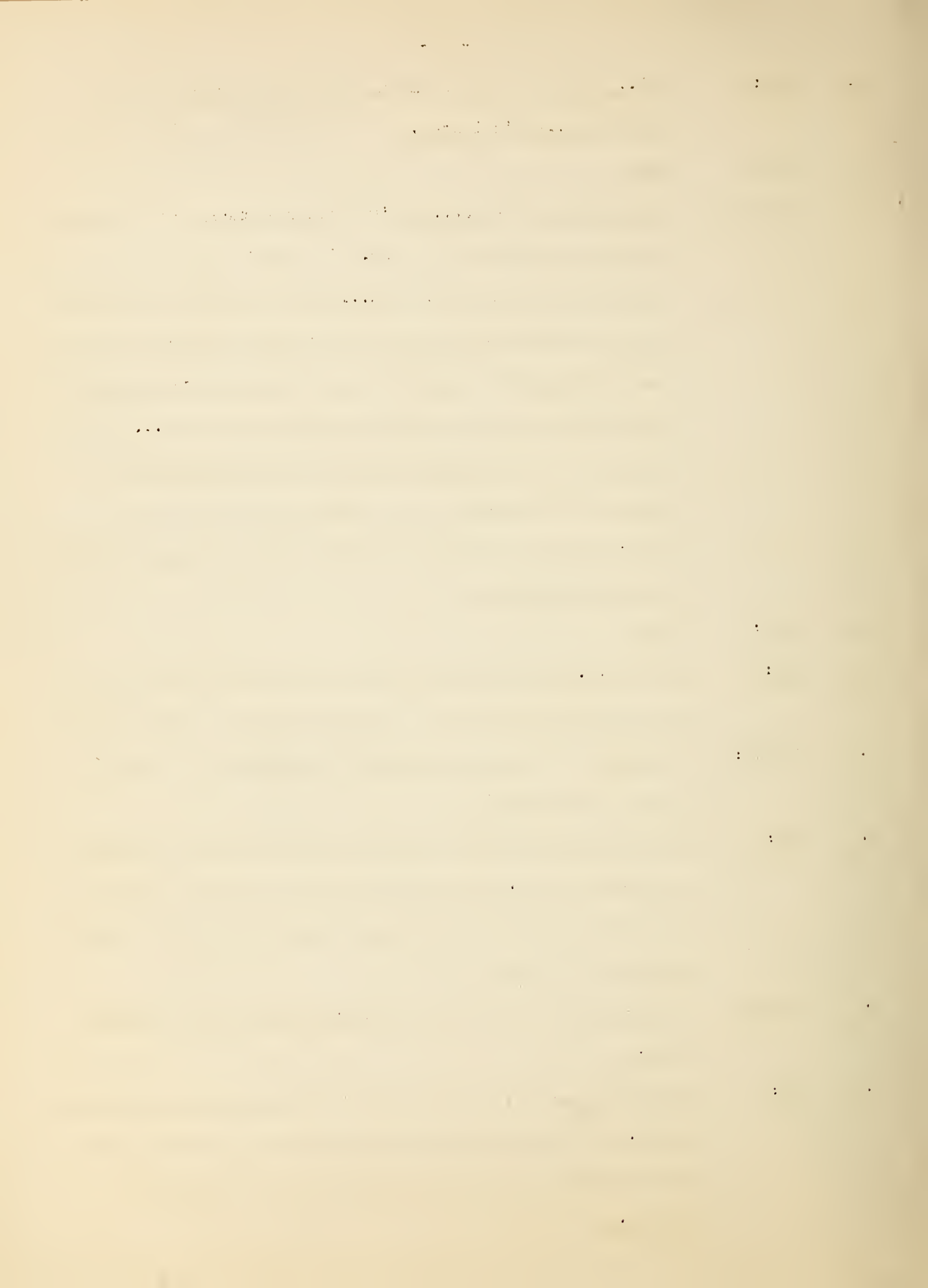
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41. JOHN: Oh no...any animal or vegetable oil on any combustible material may ignite by itself if its left alone...and if it has just the right amount of air and just the right amount of humidity.
42. FREYMAN: It seems to me you can easily avoid that danger by good housekeeping. Mrs. Carrigan's just kidding herself if she cleans the rest of the house and let's all that stuff stay in the closet. But can it really start a fire, Johnny?
43. JOHN: So you're still doubtful? Well listen...I've heard of spontaneous fires started by fertilizer on a roll of burlap taken off a rose bush. And another fire started by a stack of old newspapers in a basement. The carbon in the ink was responsible.
44. FREYMAN: It seems incredible.
45. JOHN: And an old silk dress in a clothes hamper started one fire. It was the black dye on it that caused the damage.
46. FREYMAN: Well, I never!
47. JOHN: Fire Prevention Week is a good reminder to clean out all the rubbish you don't need...whether it's in the attic, closets, or the cellar. And be sure to store oily rags in closed metal containers...if you absolutely have to keep them around.
48. FREYMAN: Why Johnny...now you sould like you're making a speech.
49. JOHN: Oh, that would never do. So let's take another peek into Mrs. Carrigan's house, and see how she's coming along on her fire prevention speech.
50. FREYMAN: Her intentions seem all right, Johnny...but she doesn't appear to be doing too well on her fire prevention...



51. JOHN: Well....Mrs. Carrigan seems to be having trouble with her fuses now....Let's listen.
52. SOUND: PAUSE
53. CARRIGAN: That husband of mine....If I've told him once, I've told him six times to put in a new fuse. I guess I might as well stick a penny in and forget it. Mmm...seem to remember Joe saying that there were some fuses in this drawer someplace. Let's see...good...here's one...but its a thirty ampere fuse... and the others are only fifteen amperes. Oh well....I guess it will give us a stronger current or something...but I suppose if a few amperes are good...a few more would be better. And now I really must think about my speech (FADE) for this afternoon.
54. SOUND: PAUSE
55. JOHN: Oh lady....Mrs. Freyman, somebody had better tell her about the saying "electricity is a good servant but a bad master."
56. FREYMAN: (PUZZLED) You mean she shouldn't have used that thirty ampere fuse, Johnny?
57. JOHN: And how she shouldn't! Monkeying with fuses causes plenty of grief in homes. And especially those pennies. Save your money from the fuse box and you'll probably be saving your home from fire.
58. FREYMAN: Johnny, you'll just have to explain...fuses are a mystery to me.
59. JOHN: Well, the fuse is the safety valve of the house's electrical system. It's intentionally made weaker than the wire, so the fuse will blow out first in case of an overload of current.



60. FREYMAN: Go on....I follow you so far.
61. JOHN: So if you use a penny instead of a fuse, or a thirty ampere fuse when all it takes is a fifteen, you make the wire the weakest link in the chain.
62. FREYMAN: And that's dangerous.
63. JOHN: Right. Some wire hidden in a wall will eventually overheat from the extra load of current. It will set the frame of the house on fire. And that fire might travel through the entire shell of the house before any one discovers it.
64. FREYMAN: You mean the insides of the walls could be on fire without any one knowing it?
65. JOHN: Sure....There's a classic case of a family in New York. They smelled smoke for four days...but couldn't find the fire. Finally the entire side of the house burst into flame.
66. FREYMAN: And all because of an overheated wire someplace....
67. JOHN: That got overheated because somebody stuck a penny in the fuse box...or a bigger fuse than the circuit could stand.
68. FREYMAN: Well, do you think Mrs. Carrigan's house burnt down?
69. JOHN: Let's see...no, not yet. There she is, the lucky lady, in the kitchen. She seems to be working on something...let's hope it's a safe something...this time.
70. SOUND: PAUSE
71. CARRIGAN: Now let's see have I got everything...a basin...my gloves...and the gasoline. Oh and I'd better put out my cigarette too. Must remember to say that in my speech this afternoon at the club. "Ladies, do not smoke while you are cleaning anything with gasoline...it's dangerous." Guess I'll fill this basin only half full....



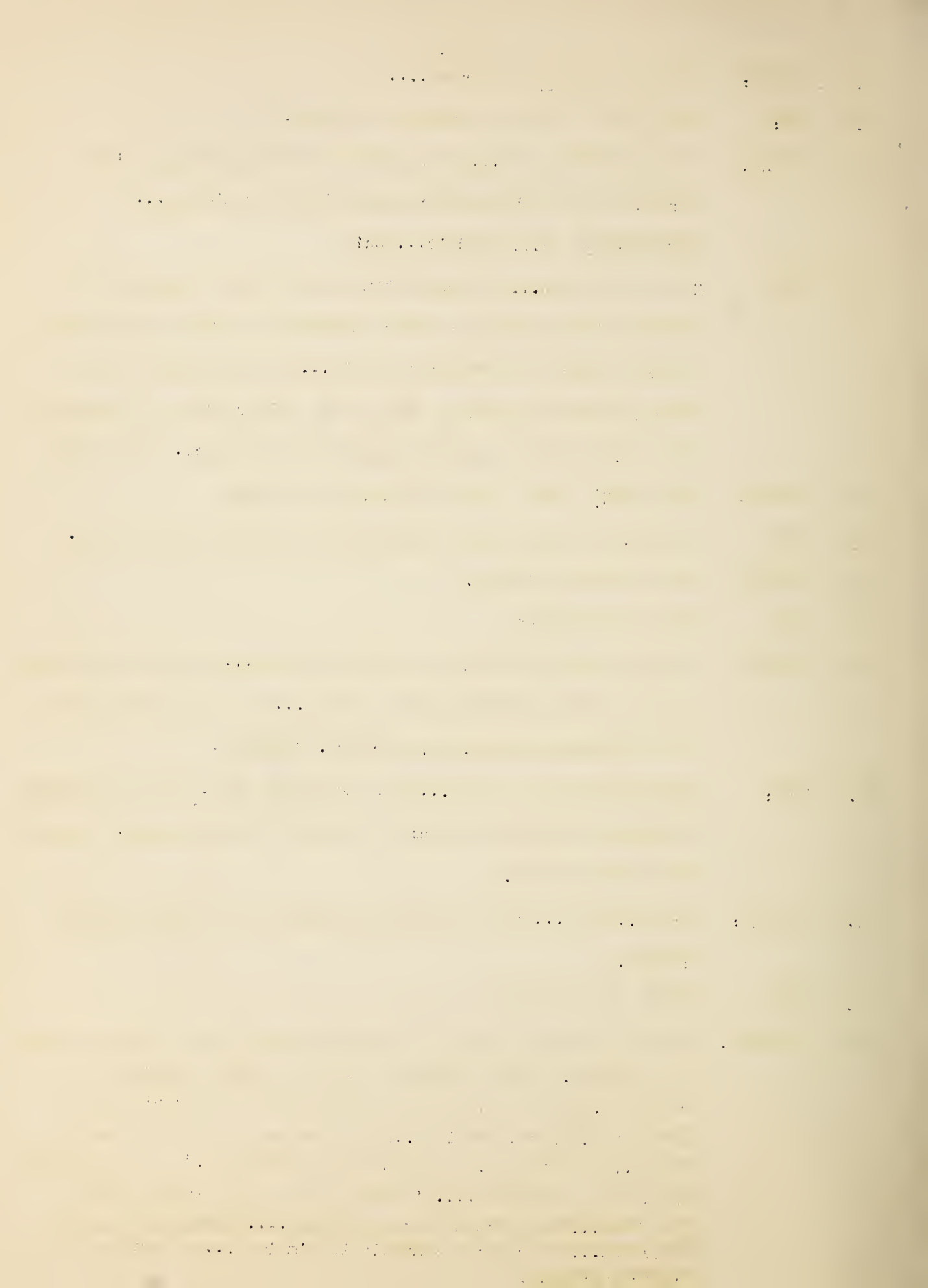




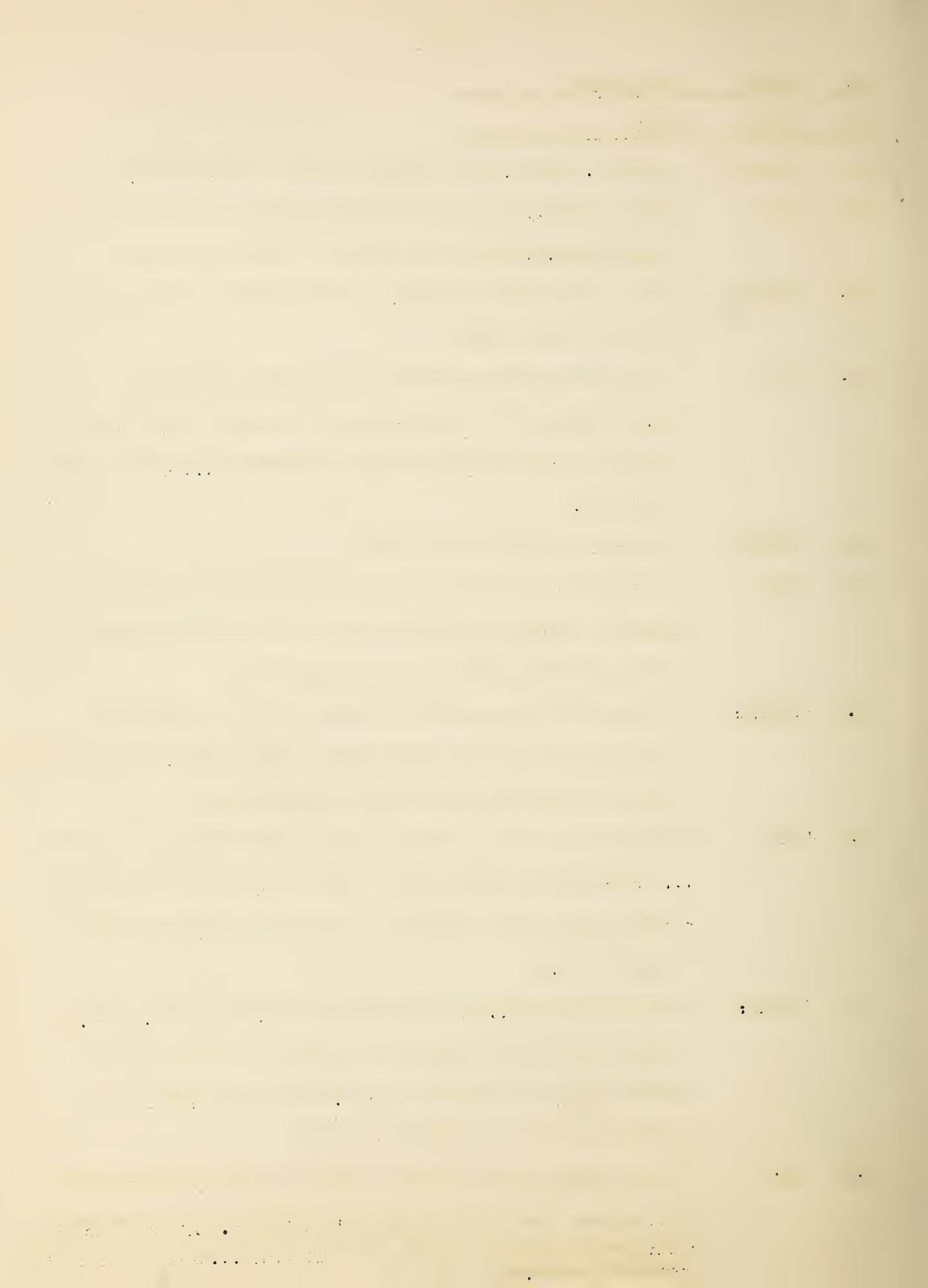
72. SOUND: POURING LIQUID
73. JOHN: (SOTTO VOCE) Mrs. Freyman....I can't stand watching this.  
That gal's fooling with death.
74. FREYMAN: Well don't look. What's the matter with you anyway, Johnny?  
She put out her cigarette, didn't she?
75. JOHN: (MUMBLES) Oh women, women. Look, you wouldn't put  
dynamite in your kitchen sink, would you?
76. FREYMAN: (DISDAINFUL) Of course I wouldn't.
77. JOHN: Well cleaning with gasoline is just as dangerous. You have  
no idea how many women actually lose their lives every year  
...because they try to clean clothing in gasoline, naptha  
or benzine.
78. FREYMAN: Oh they're probably careless and do their cleaning near a  
fire.
79. JOHN: Not necessarily...it's just that no home is big enough for  
the safe use of gasoline.
80. FREYMAN: Now that you'll have to explain, Johnny.
81. JOHN: Well...gasoline and those other fluids are dangerous. When  
their fumes mix with the air, they can be exploded very  
easily. All it takes is a tiny flame...or even a spark,  
and wham! You'll be just another statistic.
82. FREYMAN: But I still say, that all you have to remember is to do the  
cleaning somewhere away from a flame.
83. JOHN: And I still say uh uh. Listen, just a pint of gasoline can  
turn two hundred cubic feet of air into an explosive....  
And it can be touched off by the spark from a cat's back.  
And another thing, even a small open flame like the pilot in  
your gas stove...will follow a stream of gasoline back two  
hundred feet to the container. And then you'll really find  
out how permanent death is.



84. FREYMAN: Oh that really is dangerous....
85. JOHN: That's what I've been trying to tell you.
86. FREYMAN: But two hundred feet...you could clean with gasoline in the bedroom or the bathroom where there isn't any flame....  
(DOUBTFULLY) or...couldn't...you?
87. JOHN: The answer is no...a thousand times no. Safety experts say no cleaning with gasoline or other inflammable liquid in the house. Gasoline vapors are heavier than air...so they settle to the floor and spread rapidly. What if the cellar door is open...and the gasoline vapor is gently wafted to the furnace. Then what?
88. FREYMAN: (VERY MEEK) Then I guess it's...end of story.
89. JOHN: Exactly...so please...no cleaning with gasoline in the house.
90. FREYMAN: Oh my goodness, Johnny.
91. JOHN: What's the matter?
92. FREYMAN: The last time we looked in on Mrs. Carrigan...she was just getting ready to clean something with gasoline...and in the kitchen too. Do you suppose...she....Oh, poor Mrs. Carrigan.
93. JOHN: Relax...there she is now...safe and sound. See, she's peacefully ironing...evidently she decided not to do that cleaning. Or else she has nine lives.
94. FREYMAN: Johnny...look...she's all dressed up...hat and all...and she's ironing.
95. JOHN: (FADE) Let's listen.
96. CARRIGAN: Oh I've just got to get that speech ready...I'll go over it while I'm ironing. (HIGH REGISTER) "Ladies....(LOW REGISTER) uh Ladies...do you keep your rugs well away from fireplaces and stoves? Well you should....Do you put your ashes into metal cans...well, Ladies, you know that's important." Oh dear...it's later than I thought....I'd better leave this ironing until I get back...where are my bag and gloves....(PROJECTING) oh here they are...never forgive myself if I'm late...what will the chairman say....



97.     SOUND:       DOOR SLAMS
- 
98.     SOUND:       PAUSE
- 
99.     FREYMAN:     Goodness, Johnny, she certainly slams a lot of doors.
100.    JOHN:        She'll probably be back in another minute and slam it again,  
                     Mrs. Freyman...because she left the electric iron on.
101.    FREYMAN:     Well, I hope she'll be back. You don't have to tell me that an  
                     iron can start a fire.
102.    JOHN:        It sure can...even if there's a good stand under it.  
                     Mrs. Freyman, did you know that most electric irons can get  
                     as hot as eighteen hundred degrees Fahrenheit...that's nearly  
                     a red heat.
103.    FREYMAN:     No wonder they can start fires.
104.    JOHN:        And they start plenty of them. In fact, to get statistical,  
                     there are about forty fires every day in the United States,  
                     because electric irons are left plugged in.
105.    FREYMAN:     It's too bad there couldn't be some kind of a mechanical  
                     reminder that the iron is on...like a bell ringing or something.  
                     Though that might be rather hard on the nerves.
106.    JOHN:        Well you can get one of those pilot light fixtures. You know  
                     ...a pushbutton switch, and a place to plug in the cord, and  
                     right between them a little red light that glows when the  
                     current is on.
107.    FREYMAN:     That sounds good....I'll have to look around for one. But,  
                     Johnny, don't some irons have a gadget that cuts off the  
                     current when the iron gets too hot...and then turns it on  
                     again when it's too cool for ironing?
108.    JOHN:        Yes, I guess some of them do. But the best safety device for  
                     an electric iron is the person who's using it. All she has to  
                     remember is to keep it shut off at all times...except when she's  
                     actually ironing.



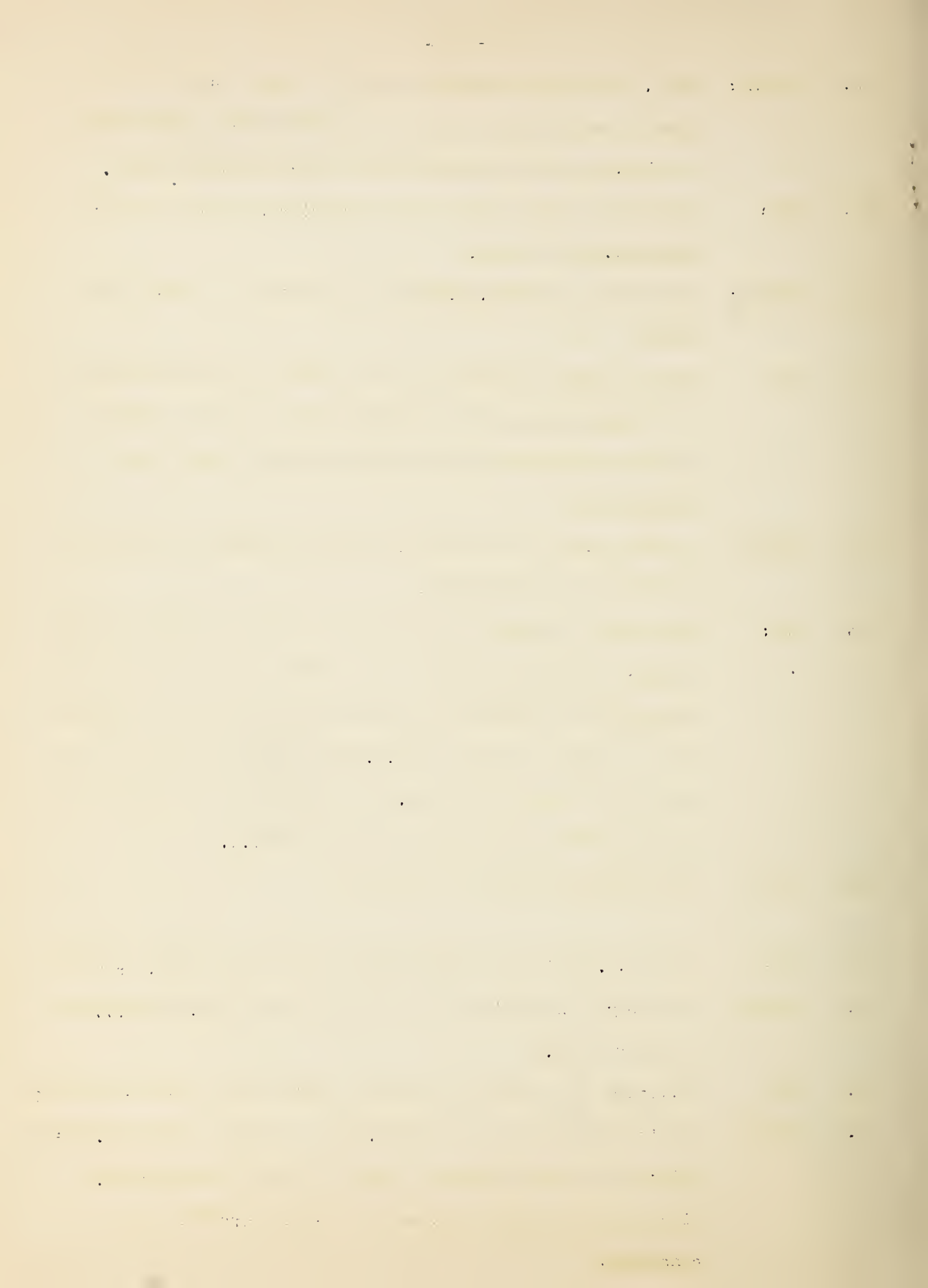


109. FREYMAN: (SNIFFS) Do you smell something burning, Johnny?
110. SOUND: FIRE SIREN SNEAKS IN
111. JOHN: Do I? I'll say...well, what do you know, Mrs. Carrigan finally succeeded in setting fire to the house.
112. SOUND: BRING IT UP LOUD AND TAKE IT OUT
113. FREYMAN: Was it that electric iron?
114. JOHN: Sure...while she went dashing off to her club to lecture on Fire Prevention Week, she forgot to pull out the plug for the iron. Well call me Fiorello and let's go see the fire....
115. SOUND: FIRE ENGINES UP AND OUT
116. JOHN: Well...that was what I call a merry old blaze, Mrs. Freyman.
117. FREYMAN: Johnny, you certainly enjoyed watching Mrs. Carrigan's house burn down...and after you've spent so much time telling me about fire prevention.
118. JOHN: Well...a fire's very dramatic.
119. FREYMAN: Sure...if it's somebody else's house that's burning.
120. JOHN: Guess that's right...there really is no excuse for fires. And there's no excuse for the fact the United States holds the world's record for destruction of property by fire.
121. FREYMAN: That's one record I'm not very proud of.
122. JOHN: Me either...especially when you think how much privation and suffering and human life go along with those fires.
123. FREYMAN: It's terrible to think that one of the greatest factors in our fire record is one we can control...it's just plain carelessness.
124. JOHN: That's why President Truman has asked every citizen to do his part by learning how to detect and eliminate all possible causes of fires in homes and business...in order to safeguard both lives and property.





125. FREYMAN: Well, I think Fire Prevention Week is a good time to begin a regular check of your home room by room for the common causes of fire...so that every week can be fire prevention week.
126. JOHN: And this is a good time to start regular fire drills for the family...just in case.
127. FREYMAN: Now that's a thought....What do you include in a family fire drill?
128. JOHN: Some one ought to explain to every member of the family that in a burning house, the stairway usually acts like a flue. And that generally the gases from the flames below come sweeping up.
129. FREYMAN: In other words in a bad fire, the main stairway of a house is usually not a safe way out.
130. JOHN: That's it. So figure out another exit for each member of the family. And tell them that if the bedroom door is hot to the touch...it's a sure sign that it's fatal to open it. Convince them to remain in their rooms...behind the protection of that closed door until help comes. Then they'll know what to do in case they wake up some night and hear this....
131. SOUND: FIRE ENGINES AND SIREN UP AND OUT
132. JOHN: And now...what's on CONSUMER TIME next Saturday, Mrs. Freyman?
133. FREYMAN: The story of something we all take for granted...Johnny...the story of water.
134. JOHN: Oh...then we're going to continue talking about fire prevention?
135. FREYMAN: That's only one use for water...there are many, many more. We're going to see how important water is for soil conservation, electricity, irrigation...and how each use affects us as consumers.



136. JOHN: Don't forget drinking purposes too. So, friends, be with us next Saturday at the same time for another edition of

137. SOUND: CASH REGISTER

138. ANNCR: CONSUMER TIME

139. SOUND: CASH REGISTER ... CLOSE DRAWER

140. ANNCR: CONSUMER TIME, written by Eleanor Miller and directed by Frederick Schweikher, is presented by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, through the facilities of the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations. It comes to you from Washington, D. C.....And, incidentally, friends, while you have been listening to this program, seven homes have gone up in flames somewhere in the United States.

This is NBC, the National Broadcasting Company.

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE